

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- a. The Virtual Science Center and Hands-on Learning Programs  
THE DELTA SCIENCE CENTER at Big Break
- b. The project is to build a web site based upon two plus years of privately funded and ongoing Delta Science Center (DSC) programs. The programs are both student-based and professional collections of baseline data focused on Big Break Lagoon and its Marsh Creek watershed in the western Delta. Our concept is to create a virtual science center via the internet that informs and monitors Big Break as a microcosm of the larger Delta. Our location and the physical attributes of the site offer unprecedented opportunities for educating the public about the Bay-Delta estuary, the efforts to restore it and the personal role of citizens' opportunities and responsibilities.

This education effort is part of the Science Center's mission to create a comprehensive program of restoration, research and education at Big Break. Our three-fold approach represents regional stakeholders, including Contra Costa County, the East Bay Regional Park District, Contra Costa Water District, Contra Costa Community College District, California State University at Hayward, Contra Costa County Office of Education, Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District, Emerson Dairy, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, the Sierra Club and Audubon Society.

The project links hands-on learning for students from kindergarten through graduate school to a collection and distribution point on the internet. It focuses student and professional scientific baseline work on shallow-water habitat, riparian forest, seasonal wetlands, agricultural wetlands and dune scrub habitat. Primary species addressed include all runs of salmon, delta smelt, steelhead and splittail. The site and focus also include several species of migratory birds including Swainsons' Hawk, California Black Rail, and Greater Sandhill Crane. In addition to the education/research focus on fish and birds, the project will benefit western pond turtle, giant garter snake and legless lizard.

Our approach is to fund a highly qualified creative team of web designers, graphic artists and computer programmers to collect, interpret and input all student and professional baseline work into a lively hands-on science program with the best of what the internet can provide. This is a two year proposed process that provides for the orderly collection of data and the creative time necessary to maximize the web site production. The project will cost \$54,000 and benefits significantly from in-kind data collection/student activities provided by the East Bay Regional Park District and computer hardware and connectivity provided by California State University at Hayward. The project has significant local support and is well coordinated with other Bay-Delta education programs.